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TAGS: [PHUM](#) [KDEM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: KHALEDA ZIA ASSURES AMBASSADOR HER PARTY OPPOSES
VIOLENCE

REF: DHAKA 06493

Classified By: Ambassador Patricia Butenis, reason para 1.4 d.

¶1. (SBU) Late November 1, Ambassador and poloff (notetaker) called on former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia at her residence on the military cantonment. Morshed Khan, recently Foreign Minister, and Manan Bhuiyan, secretary general of her Bangladesh Nationalist Party, were also present.

¶2. (C) Ambassador noted that during the recent round of political violence, activists of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party exercised relative restraint, and that she had raised her concerns about the opposition's use of violence during her recent meeting with Awami League president Sheikh Hasina (reftel). Ambassador also observed that she had flagged violence as a major concern at an Awami League public briefing for diplomats earlier in the day. She urged Zia to continue counseling restraint and to keep in check calls from party subordinates, including her son Tariq, for a more aggressive posture.

¶3. (C) Zia affirmed she opposes violence and her party workers will not take the offensive, but she must stand up for them by acknowledging their right to self-defense if attacked.

¶4. (C) Zia endorsed Ambassador's point on the importance of Chief Adviser Ahmed's acting in a visibly non-partisan manner. She claimed that her party had not submitted any names or placed any supporters among the advisers named by Ahmed. (Note: This claim may technically be true, but according to contacts at the presidency, Zia's party submitted several names orally.) Zia described Ahmed as an impartial, non-party man favorably known to her from their days together, along with the Awami League and Jamaat Islam, in the anti-Ershad movement in the late 1980s.

¶5. (C) On the opposition's insistence that Chief Election Commissioner Aziz resign, Zia replied, "Not possible." Hasina, Zia complained, had ignored Zia's demand in 2001 as the then-opposition leader for the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner Syed, so why should she accommodate Hasina now? Bhuiyan interjected that Abdul Jalil, his Awami League counterpart, had assured him during their recent talks that Justice Hasan was the only obstacle, and that finding someone else to be Chief Adviser would break the impasse. Khan charged the Awami League historically pockets concessions by his party without ever offering any of its own.

¶6. (C) Asked to predict BNP's election performance, Zia said her alliance would win 180-190 seats, compared to the 220 it holds now. This outcome presumes support from the Jatiya

Party, which she said Ershad has already promised her. Zia insisted that, opposition assertions aside, her party has strong support from the Hindu community. Khan stated his constituency is 38 percent Hindu, adding that the new generation of Hindu voters is more independent and open to his party.

BUTENIS